



**Committee on
Homeland Security Democrats**
Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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**Homeland Security Democrats Introduce the
Department of Homeland Security Reform Act of 2005**

*Legislation Aims to Correct the Problems of the Administration's
"Second Stage Review" Recommendations*

WASHINGTON—An overwhelming majority of the House Homeland Security Committee Democrats, led by Ranking Member Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), has introduced legislation that would provide more accountability for the new offices created by Homeland Security Department Secretary Michael Chertoff's "Second Stage Review." The bill also provides more direction for some of the changes made in the Fiscal Year 2006 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, which Congress approved Thursday.

"The Department of Homeland Security Reform Act of 2005" would tackle crucial security and preparedness gaps created by Chertoff's reorganization. For example, the bill will stop the Secretary's effort to split the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) preparedness and response functions.

"We have seen how American lives are saved or lost depending on how well FEMA is able to prepare for disasters," said Rep. Thompson. "It would be foolish to consider stripping this crucial agency of its preparedness mission even after seeing what happened during Hurricane Katrina."

The Democrats' bill would keep FEMA intact and strengthen it by requiring it to have a director and deputy director with extensive backgrounds in emergency or disaster-related management. The deputy director would also have to be a career Federal employee—not a political appointee as in the past.

"The law requires the head of the National Park Service to have certain experiences before they can take the job. The least we can do is to make sure the Director of FEMA has worked on disasters before," Rep. Thompson added.

The legislation also sets out for the first time the power and responsibility of the Department's new Chief Intelligence Officer (CIO). The Administration has proposed creating the CIO, but has not asked Congress to set out its authority.

"9/11 taught us all that we must have an intelligence community we can hold accountable for their failures," Rep. Thompson said. "If Congress doesn't act to set out the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Intelligence Officer, then we will not be able to hold him accountable if we have another intelligence failure."

"President Bush says that we may need the military to respond to natural disasters in the future," said U.S. Rep. Kendrick B. Meek, Ranking Member on the Management, Integration and Oversight Subcommittee, "but we don't need to call in the troops. What we need is a FEMA with competent leadership, strong organization, sufficient resources to do its job and an Administration that will give it the support it needs. That's what we're trying to achieve."

“This bill provides guidance and direction to many of the Administration’s ill-defined plans for departmental reorganization,” said Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science and Technology. “We know full-well that DHS needs structural overhaul. It has become clear that it will be up to Congress--and our committee in particular-- to make sure it’s done right. That is why this legislation is so critical.”

“The DHS Reform Act of 2005 fills the implementation gaps left by the Second Stage Review and allows Congress to mandate long range departmental goals that will make the review become a working reality,” said Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI). Rep. Langevin is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Nuclear and Biological Attack. “Among its recommendations, the legislation calls for a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, which has proven to be a vital defense planning tool and can only help focus the department’s resources and manpower for years to come.”

A summary of the complete bill is attached.

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